

EXAMPLES OF PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN COUNTY ELECTION OFFICIALS AND SCHOOLS TO PROMOTE STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN THE ELECTION PROCESS

March 23, 2006

The following county election offices responded to an email survey in early November of 2005. If a county is not on this list, it does not necessarily mean they do not have a partnership with schools. Counties uniformly report that students are excellent poll workers and that the older poll workers appreciate their energy and their abilities. In almost every case the election officials indicate that contact with teachers, and the commitment of those teachers to involving their students in the process, is the most important element of a successful program.

ALAMEDA COUNTY

Provides election information to schools and teachers. Elections staff communicate with teachers via email and by letter to provide general election information as well as packets for students to apply to sign up to be poll workers on Election Day. For the November 2005 election Alameda placed approximately 1,200 students as poll workers.

BUTTE COUNTY

Sends a letter to schools to let teachers and students know they can be poll workers on Election Day. Approximately 15% of their poll workers are students.

CALAVERAS COUNTY

Provides information, such as sample ballot and other explanatory materials, to teachers on request. Also uses students as poll workers.

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY

Conducted an “all out” student poll worker recruitment program in 2004. They constructed a display board and booklets and took these to 12 high schools where they would recruit students by setting up tables in the cafeteria or where the school advised them was appropriate. Whereas they had 75 student poll workers for the March 2004 election, this “Youth with a Vision” outreach program resulted in 300 for the November

2004 election. Students who work as poll workers receive a wrist band with “Student Poll Worker” written on it. They send packets to each high school in the county, including an application to sign up as a student poll worker. They also recruit through local colleges.

EL DORADO COUNTY

They have two retired government teachers (paid from the extra-help budget) who visit each government class in each high school to register them as voters. They also have a “Midnight Madness” program where they take students to shopping centers and other locations on the last day to register to vote and provide this service until 8-9 at night. They have been conducting this program for 5-6 years, made initial contact with schools through the principals but find the teachers to be very important to keeping the program going. The Superintendent is also very supportive. El Dorado also has a PowerPoint presentation for the schools. For the last election they had 104 polling places and 140 student poll workers.

FRESNO COUNTY

Formed an “Operation Youth Vote” committee comprised of school officials, staff from the elections office, representatives from community groups, local elected officials, and businesses (Comcast) to plan school-based activities. They have a staff person assigned to the school program, and he makes presentations, conducts mock elections, and otherwise communicates with each school on a regular basis. Generally the county estimates a need for 700 student poll workers at each election, and gets applications from about 950.

GLENN COUNTY

Provides materials (posters, forms to register to vote, etc.) to teachers and schools to register students as voters, and provided voting equipment (voting booth and machine) to schools. They recruit student poll workers by sending a letter to schools.

HUMBOLDT COUNTY

Conducted the “Teen Vote” program in 2000 wherein their ballot printer provided mock ballots and high schools registered students to vote. Although the program has diminished in recent years, the elections office is very interested in its rejuvenation. They also recruit student poll workers on college campuses.

KERN COUNTY

Sends letter to each school describing the student poll worker program, including the rate of pay and the hours students would be required to work, along with the necessary forms to apply to be a student poll worker (including the parental permission form). They have also conducted mock elections and voting equipment demonstrations, and provide training for student poll workers on the school grounds.

LASSEN

Works with specific teachers with whom a relationship has been established over the years. Estimates that 6% of poll workers are students.

LOS ANGELES

Has full-time staff to reach out to schools so they make regular presentations to high school government classes. They estimate that 100 schools participate in their student poll worker program. They provide on-site training to any school that provides 40 or more student poll workers. They provide a \$100 stipend to teachers to participate in the program. They also work with student groups --- such as the California State Student Association, Girls Today/Women Tomorrow, who provided 200 poll workers on a separate grant program. They also provide forms to register to vote to each school and have a strong program to recruit from colleges. In particular, the Los Angeles Community Colleges each have a "Mobilization Director" charged with connecting students to community programs and voting. For the November 2004 election they had approximately 1,500 (18%) student poll workers.

MADERA COUNTY

Conducted a pilot program with one high school for the November 2004 election with a goal of recruiting one student poll worker for each polling place. The pilot program went well, so their goal for June 2006 is to involve all the high schools in the county. They trained students at the school site. They also provide forms to register to vote to schools, along with posters and other materials. Many of their students are bilingual – which is helpful in meeting their Voting Rights Act language requirement.

MONTEREY

Has "Student Election Official" program, with 10% of polling places staffed by at least one student. Students also work in the elections office on election night. They also have "Team Up for Democracy" program --- including a PowerPoint presentation --- that encourages groups (including student groups) to sign up to staff polling places and turn their pay over to the group, so that it is a fundraiser for the group.

ORANGE COUNTY

Has a full time person assigned to working with the schools and recruiting student poll workers. They had about 1,500 student poll workers at the November 2004 election. They also send a packet to each teacher identified as being interested in this program, along with brochures, FAQ's, posters, and other materials. Copies to each district office, as well. Their program also extends to private schools, with at least one private school making working on Election Day a school project. They will make presentations to

schools and have a “Votemobile” (30’ long trailer) to visit schools. They are active in promoting voter registration in the schools, attend school events, place ads in school newspapers, and have established email communication with many schools. In addition, they have an “A Team” of students who come to the elections office on Election Day to fill-in in any polling places where the regular poll workers did not show up. They also have a “PM Program” that permits high school students to work in a polling place after school hours, to handle the evening rush, help close the precinct, etc. without missing a day at school (one school provides 160 students for this program). They also recruit at colleges (Cal State Fullerton supplies 70 students to work at HQ on election night).

PLACER COUNTY

They visit each government class in each high school in the county at least once a year. They register voters and demonstrate voting equipment. They invite representatives from the political parties to discuss with the students their different party philosophies. They indicate that about 80% of eligible 18-year olds are registered to vote, and of these about 80% turn out on Election Day. About 5% of their poll workers are students.

RIVERSIDE COUNTY

They send a packet to teachers before each election. Before starting the program they went to each school district to get approval for participation. They recruit about 250 students per election --- about 1 for every 2 polling places. They also have a new Votemobile, which they are outfitting to use as a mobile polling place, but also to take to schools for both recruiting students and also for conducting training.

SACRAMENTO COUNTY

They have recently formed a partnership with the Sacramento City Unified School District to promote voter registration and civic participation in schools, and conducted a three-part program to: (1) Explain the initiative process; (2) Talk about the measures on the ballot; and, (3) Conduct a mock election. They report having about 300 student poll workers, many of whom are bilingual.

SAN BENITO

They met with the principal of each high school and sent a packet of materials to each explaining the student poll worker program. This is the first effort at the program and had limited results, but they want to continue to expand it and improve it.

SAN DIEGO COUNTY

They have a very successful student poll worker program. For the November 2005 election they had about 800 students apply, but could only place about 600 (need to have the polling place near where the student lives – they have a policy of not having students work more than 10 miles from their polling place). They rely on teachers to promote the

program. They report that one teacher has formed a club; one purpose of which is to work at polling places on Election Day. Another AP History teacher makes it a class project. And another teacher takes a field trip on Election Day to visit polling places, the elections office, and other parts of the administration of the election.

POINT LOMA HIGH SCHOOL --- The teacher formed a club for student poll workers. The “salary” for the students who work as poll workers goes to this club, and earns the club about \$2,000 per election. The money is used to support extra programs in the social studies department that are specifically targeted at the students, such as a subscription to the NY Times “up Front” magazine for teens, as well as a similar publication from the Wall Street Journal. The funds also help purchase added technology for the social studies department. Students also receive extra-credit, as well as credit towards the school’s requirement for community service hours.

ESCONDIDO CHARTER HIGH SCHOOL --- The whole school has taken this on as a project to “demystify” the voting process for their students and make voting something they experience directly and understand. As many as 70% of the senior class work as student poll workers. The students get the stipend (\$60 each) as well as community service credit.

RANCHO BUENA VISTA HIGH SCHOOL --- The school has a Community Participation Program that requires 6 hours of work in the community in an activity that shows them what it is to be a citizen. The 12th Grade Government and Economics students can earn 4 hours by working as a poll worker. Other ways of earning time/credit include: going to a school board meeting will get you two hours, same for a city council meeting. Writing a letter to an elected representative earns 1 hour. In the November 2004 election 180 students worked as poll workers. They are required to write a “reflection” on their time as a poll worker --- what they observed, what they learned, what it meant to them

SAN FRANCISCO COUNTY

They indicate that more than half of their poll workers (not including inspectors) are students. For the November 2005 election 1,240 were students --- 52% of the total. Approximately 3 months before an election the county hires 4 temporary help employees to visit schools. They visit each of the 32 high schools multiple times and discuss general voter outreach issues, such as why students should register to vote, the upcoming election, how to use the voting equipment, etc. They also recruit for poll workers and have established an extensive list of teacher and other school contacts. The county provides a list of student poll workers to the school both before the election (the names of those signed up) and after the election (those who showed up). The cancellation rate for student poll workers is 2.1% --- much lower than the 10.5% rate for adult clerks. They also offer to help conduct mock elections.

SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY

They contact each school by letter prior to each election and identify teacher contacts on each campus. They provide application forms to teachers and about 18% of their poll workers are students, and many students work at the elections office on Election Day and night. They also go to classes to talk about elections, and provide sample ballots and other materials. They also recruit from Spanish clubs in order to assist in meeting their Voting Rights Act language requirements.

SAN MATEO COUNTY

They have assigned staff to design and implement a student poll worker recruitment program. They started with a goal of 30 students for the November 2004 election and increased this to 108 for the November 2005 election. Their goal for June 2006 is 250. They created a brochure, with pictures of students working at polling places, that they use to outreach to students. They also provide speakers to government classes and conduct a program in conjunction with the League of Women Voters to distribute forms to register to vote to students with their graduation materials. They are contemplating an innovative expansion of their program to encourage students to “adopt” a polling place, sign up as a group to work on Election Day, then donate their pay to a community service project, such as Meals on Wheels.

SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

Recruits student poll workers on a school-by-school basis. Had 32 student poll workers for 168 polling places in November 2004. They estimate that about 5% of their poll workers are students, and would like to increase that to about 20%. They had a very strong program of mock elections in schools, but this has diminished over time with personnel changes at schools.

SANTA CLARA COUNTY

They contact each school via letter to the government teachers and if 20 or more students sign up at a school they will conduct training on-site at the school. They routinely recruit about 800 student poll workers for statewide elections --- about 1 for each polling place -- - and are committed to placing every student who applies, even if it means adding an additional poll worker to a polling place. They send a “Certificate of Thanks” to students with their paychecks, and notify the school principals and ask that students be given credit in the school newspaper.

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

They send a letter to each 12th grade government teacher letting them know that the county will do classroom presentations about how elections work, and also providing information about how students can become poll workers. They began the student poll

worker recruitment program in 2000 and produced a video for use in schools. They have about 1 student poll worker for each polling place (150 for a major election).

SHASTA COUNTY

Recruits student poll workers through personal contact with teachers. A couple teachers bring students to the elections office to observe and help out on Election Day. They county will send staff to schools to talk with government classes about elections in general or any hot topics of the day. They began the program in 2004 and 80 of their 550 poll workers for the November 2004 election were students. They indicate that it is sometimes fun to build on school rivalries and see which can provide the greatest number of poll workers.

SOLANO COUNTY

They hired two UC Berkeley graduates to work as extra help. The election official set them to the task of revising the “Poll Worker Training Manual” to make it more fun, interesting, and appropriate for a student audience, and to design a poll worker training program just for students. The manual they produced was very condensed and included pictures from popular movies, and focused on things that students, or first-time poll workers, might not know (like what is a “roster”). The graduate students taught the training classes, and the students responded well to learning from their peers. The county used 65 students as poll workers for the November 2005 election, sometimes as “greeters” who would direct voters to the correct line in locations with several precincts consolidated into one polling place.

SONOMA COUNTY

The county continues to encourage schools to participate in the Student Voting Project, begun by a local citizen to encourage student voter registration. In addition, to recruit student poll workers the elections office calls all high school principals, obtains a list of the names and contact information for government teachers, and mails each a packet of information. They will be trying a “split shift” in June of 2006 to see if offering a half-day work opportunity entices more students. For the November 2005 election they had roughly 200 polling places and 45 students – so approximately 25% of the polling places had a student poll worker. In addition, they contact each school a minimum of 1 time each year to provide forms to register to vote, two schools use county voting equipment for mock elections, and students at Sonoma State staff their campus polling place.

SUTTER COUNTY

They send a letter to each high school. Two schools assigned a teacher to coordinate and oversee the program and provide about 20 – 40 students per election, about 10% of the total number of poll workers.

TEHAMA COUNTY

They work with the chair of the history or government studies at each high school. The county provides sample ballots and will run mock elections (not just for high schools --- they do this for 7th and 8th graders, too). They keep forms to register to vote stocked at each school. Recruitment of student poll workers is down a bit, due to recent retirements of key teachers who would give extra credit for this activity but the county is working to establish new relationships to keep the program going.

TULARE COUNTY

They work with the County Superintendent of Schools whose office includes a position of Project Director for the “Schools to Careers” program. This person contacts teachers and distributes applications for student poll workers through inter-office mail. Their goal is to assign a student to every polling place and generally about 15% of their poll workers are students. For one recent election, 90 out of 764 poll workers at 77 polling places were students. They “borrowed” the design of their program from Fresno County.

VENTURA COUNTY

About 12% of their poll workers are students. They have an application on their web site and call the government teachers to build up relationships. They also provide the information to the district offices.

YOLO COUNTY

The county elections official (or sometimes another staff) visits each high school 1-2 times each year to discuss elections in general, to encourage voter registration, and to recruit poll workers. The schools may arrange an assembly, or the elections official will speak to the government classes. The elections official spoke with each of the principals, and each have agreed to participate in the student poll worker program. According to the county, they try to place 2 students per polling place because pairing them up makes them feel less isolated. Approximately 15% of their poll workers are students. The county also conducts an “early voting” program on the UC Davis campus to encourage student voting.

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